

I support media diversity

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. It is my strong belief that further consolidation of media ownership would be contrary to the public interest. I recently moved from San Francisco, where the Hearst Corporation essentially consolidated the two major newspapers by subsidizing another company to buy one of the papers while moving most of that paper's staff to the other paper. The result has been that in any serious sense, San Francisco is now a one newspaper town. The resulting loss of diversity in reporting and opinion has been great.

As an economist, I certainly understand the benefits of market competition and the market's ability to lead to optimal outcomes for consumers in many cases. Nonetheless, there are many goods which the market is not able to allocate in a manner that society deems optimal. This is why the government continues to supply some services and regulate the provision of others. It is my belief that the media is just such a public good and that your agency has been tasked with safeguarding that good and seeing that it is allocated in a socially optimal fashion.

Media should not be viewed as a commodity, as fungible. It is essential to the workings of a democratic society that the broadest, most diverse range of views be available to the public to aid in their decision-making. As I see it, the FCC's proposed rule changes would lead to a further narrowing of the range of programming available to consumers. This, combined with the already high barriers to entry in the radio, television, and newspaper industries, will leave Americans with fewer and fewer available sources of information.

If the FCC sees fit to go forward with the proposed rule changes, it will be doing a great disservice to the American people.

Sincerely,

Leigh Chase Thompson